

As we reach the height of this year's hurricane season, I am reminded of the damage and destruction that befell Haiti, our Hemisphere's poorest nation, just one year ago. Still recovering from a devastating food crisis, in 2008, Haiti was ravaged by four hurricanes and tropical storms in a span of just 30 days. Sixty percent of the country's meager harvest was destroyed, and still today, the ability of the Haitian government to provide even basic services remains severely compromised.

While I commend the United States for providing Haiti with significant amounts of humanitarian aid, our nation can and should do better. Temporary Protected Status (TPS) would not only provide the Haitian people with substantial relief, it is also the least expensive, most immediate form of aid our government can provide. TPS would allow Haitians currently residing in the United States the ability to legally stay and work for a temporary period of time so that they may have a personal stake in rebuilding their nation. At a time when our own government advises of the physical dangers of travelling to Haiti, it is dangerous and irresponsible to repatriate Haitian migrants when Haiti's government should be focusing all of its limited resources on its country's recovery and sustainable development.

This past January, I reintroduced H.R. 144, the Haitian Protection Act, a bill which would direct the Secretary of Homeland Security to grant TPS to Haitians. Contrary to what critics believe, TPS will promote homeland security, democracy, and humanitarian efforts. The United States of America is the richest nation in the world, while Haiti is the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere struggling to recover from years of political turmoil and multiple natural disasters.

I have long fought to end our nation's double-standard immigration policies, and by continuously denying Haitians TPS, the United States continues to send a clear message: The safety of Haitian lives is not a priority compared to a Honduran, Nicaraguan, or Salvadoran life. Nationals from these countries and others have been granted TPS under circumstances similar to those facing Haiti. Why then should Haitian nationals be excluded?

Haiti's long-term stability is not only in Haiti's best interest, it is in the best interest of the United States. Just 600 miles from our shores, political and economic instability in Haiti impacts our own economy, immigration levels, and national security, thereby making it our responsibility to work to ensure Haiti's long-term stability.

It is outright shameful that our government has continued to reject Haiti's pleas for this vital assistance at a time when the Haitian government is doing everything possible to bring their country out of chaos and destruction. It is imperative that the United States seize every current opportunity to put our struggling neighbor on a path to sustained development and finally grant Haitian nationals TPS.

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